

SPECIAL EDITION

# GROUND COVER

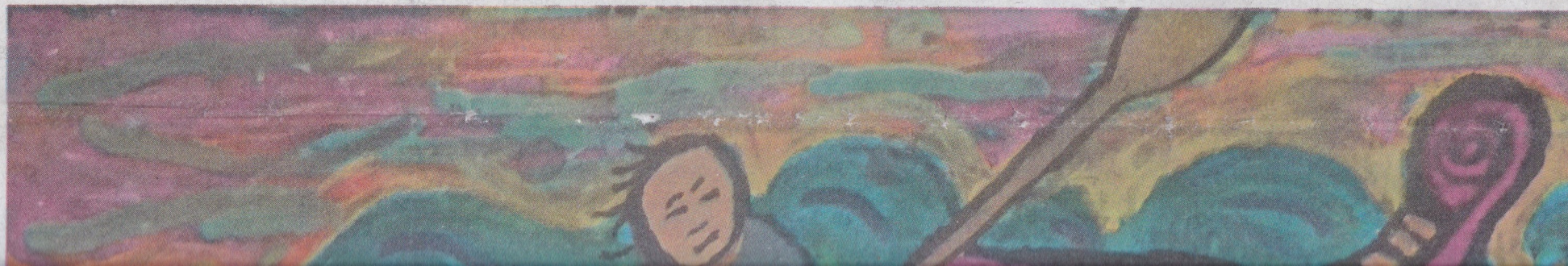
NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

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FALL/WINTER 2018

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## WOMEN'S VOICES









## IN HER OWN WORDS

### GROUNDCOVER SPECIAL EDITION WOMEN'S VOICES

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by Laurie Wechter  
Special Editor

### Introduction to this Special Edition

The women's movement in the United States and abroad received a major kickstart on January 20, 2017, the day Donald Trump became the 45th President

of the United States. By then Trump had already amassed a long and consistent track record publicly demeaning women, using words like fat, pig, dog, slob, "disgusting animal" and, of course, his infamous "When you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the p\*\*\*\*."

Women of the world took notice. On January 21, 2017, the day after Trump's inauguration, approximately five million people worldwide, including between 500,000 and one million in D.C. alone, joined the Women's March to advocate for legislation and policies that have an impact on women and their families, including healthcare reform, reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights

demeanor and is openly partisan, being shooed into a position on our country's highest court.

Most recently, we have seen a wave of young women willing to run for office. Last year, I attended the Women's March's "Reclaiming Our Time" Conference in Detroit. During opening ceremonies, attendees were asked, "Who of you will make the commitment to run for office?" An estimated 100 women stood up. During the ensuing three days, these women were trained, plugged into networks, given fundraising techniques and were offered long-term mentorship to help them develop the skills they needed to run a campaign.

According to the Brookings Institute, "In the 2018 elections, women played a bigger role than they have in any other election in American history." A report from the Brookings Institute notes, "... 255 women from the two major parties ran for office, and a total of 113 have won (as of Nov. 16)."

#### Standing on our Mother's Shoulders

As you will read in Will Shakespeare's article (p. 11), the current women's movement clearly stands on the



Opportunity Commission. Because of this, stewardesses (who were soon renamed flight attendants) fought age and wage discrimination and won a 1968 court ruling.

#### The Struggles of Homeless Women

While the women's movement has made important strides, **one area that has received relatively little public attention is the plight of homeless women.** This special issue of Groundcover News aims to address that gap by exploring the intersection of two of our society's most urgent problems: the plight of women and the

### GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

**Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.**

Susan Beckett, Publisher  
Ted Sylvester, Executive Director  
Andrew Nixon, Editor  
Laurie Wechter, Special Editor  
Olivia Perfetti, Special Editor  
Kolin Biggs, Assistant Editor  
Peter Beyer, Photographer

#### Contributors

Tabitha L., Vendor #360  
La Shawn Courtwright, Vendor #56  
Karen J. Totten, Contributor



**Laurie Wechter**, Special Editor  
**Olivia Perfetti**, Special Editor  
**Kolin Biggs**, Assistant Editor  
**Peter Beyer**, Photographer

## Contributors

**Tabitha L.**, Vendor #360  
**La Shawn Courtwright**, Vendor #56  
**Karen L. Totten**, Contributor  
**Lit Kurtz**, Vendor #159  
**Shawn Story**, Vendor #44  
**Shelley D.**, Vendor #22  
**Peggy Donham**, Vendor #98  
**Laurie Wechter**, Director of Human Services  
**Susan Beckett**, Publisher  
**Danielle Mack**, Vendor #5  
**Leonore Gerstein**, Contributor  
**Lily Au**, MISSION Contributor  
**Will Shakespeare**, Vendor #258  
**Cindy G.**, Vendor #279

**Cover painting:** "Small Boat on a Big Wave" by Laurie Wechter

**Story or Photo Submissions:**  
submissions@groundcovernews.com

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www.groundcovernews.org  
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423 S. 4th Ave, Ann Arbor  
734-263-2098

after Trump's inauguration, approximately five million people worldwide, including between 500,000 and one million in D.C. alone, joined the Women's March to advocate for legislation and policies that have an impact on women and their families, including healthcare reform, reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, racial equality, workers' rights and the environment.

Due in large part to the **Women's March**, girls and women have become increasingly outspoken about harassment, abuse and rape, attracting public concern and respect and winning court cases against predators in a system where women are still too often treated like criminals not victims.

The **#MeToo** movement has had an enormous impact on men's behavior. Men who seem to have had no compunction about humiliating, harassing and raping women are being fired, even at the highest levels. However, we continue to see abominations like the Christine Blasey-Ford versus Brett Kavanaugh hearings, where an admittedly heavy drinker who has a record of abusive behavior toward women, exhibits improper

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## Standing on our Mother's Shoulders

As you will read in Will Shakespeare's article (p. 11), the current women's movement clearly stands on the shoulders of the Women's Suffrage Movement as well as the 1960s Women's Movement.

In 1965, the Supreme Court, in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, found the standing law prohibiting birth control violated the right to marital privacy, and by extension, the right to use birth control. In 1965, illegal abortions made up one-sixth of all pregnancy and childbirth-related deaths. A 1960s survey found that eight in 10 women with low incomes in New York City who had an abortion attempted a dangerous self-induced procedure.

*Griswold v. Connecticut* served as a springboard for *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark decision issued in 1973 by the U.S. Supreme Court on the issue of the constitutionality of laws that criminalized or restricted access to abortions. Along with the right to birth control and reproductive rights, the National Organization for Women (NOW) fought for equal pay for equal work and sued to institute the Equal

## The Struggles of Homeless Women

While the women's movement has made important strides, **one area that has received relatively little public attention is the plight of homeless women.** This special issue of Groundcover News aims to address that gap by exploring the intersection of two of our society's most urgent problems: the plight of women and the blight of poverty. Women who are or have been Groundcover News Vendors in most cases are housing-insecure and have lived through times of complete homelessness.

An essay by U-M student intern Olivia Perfetti (p. 2) discusses in broad terms the lack of protections for women who live on, or make their living in, the street. Tabitha L. (p. 4), Peggy D. (p. 9), La Shawn C. (p. 6), and Lit K. (p. 6) give personal accounts of how social service agencies and the justice system have failed low-income women in their times of crisis.

I believe that it is incumbent upon women who have means and have gained rights, to see that these rights extend to the women and men in our midst who struggle to find an indoor place to stay, food, childcare, healthcare and protection rather than receive further harassment by the police and the justice system as a whole.



## Women vendors share experiences with housing insecurity

by Olivia Perfetti  
U-M Intern

You'll find in this anthology a beautiful poem written by Groundcover writer and vendor Elizabeth "Lit" Kurtz called "Outside, Too." It is not only an expression of the vulnerability and uncertainty of homelessness, but also of the bond shared by two women who have both experienced it.



Lit Kurtz, Groundcover Vendor #159

The heartbreaking reality of housing insecurity is that it does not cut women a break. The #MeToo movement brought new weight to the fact that one in five women will be raped during her lifetime, and one in three women will experience sexual violence. For many of us, the statistics only applied to "other people" before #MeToo. Now we have learned that these statistics reflect the

*He's a university person. How many students does he have? It's a burden I carry, for not following through."* She continued, "I should say being a woman, there's always that fear of what would happen sleeping outside unprotected. That is something that has been a constant." She added that this fear forces homeless women to work especially hard and be creative to find secure places to sleep.

All the vendors I spoke with agreed that nighttime is particularly difficult for female vendors. "I don't feel safe selling papers at night. I feel male vendors can withstand more of the night crowd than women," said Shelley D.

Artist and vendor Cindy explained: "When someone approaches me who looks aggressive, I generally walk away. I usually like to have my back to the wall or my back to where it will be hard for someone to get at me. I'm very aware of my surroundings, I'm constantly looking around to be safe. I know a lot of women who will not go out at night."

"Sometimes it gets scary because I sell at night," said vendor Tabitha. "Being a woman, I'm not physically as strong as a man, and it gets hard when you have an encounter with drunk men who are trying to hit on you. 'Come home with me' – I've had that quite a few times. ... Being a woman has a lot of influ-

that many people there at that time. I would try to go into the back freezer area, he would follow me and try to touch me. I couldn't do anything about it because I needed the job. I had children at home to take care of, so I kept it to myself. ... And in other previous employment, I was a call girl. And that lifestyle was a scary lifestyle."

Tabitha told me that her sister was raped in downtown Ann Arbor. All of the vendors I interviewed knew women who had been sexually assaulted. Lit told me a story about an acquaintance staying in a shelter. "Once, when I was staying in the shelter – it's cramped, people are lined up on mats, but it's not intolerable – one woman, a guy invited her to his place so she left. She woke up with him over her. She woke up just in time, and she was a wreck the next day. He had pretended to be in a wheelchair, but it was just a ruse. It was incredibly traumatizing for her. She had nobody to talk to."

The manipulation experienced by Lit's friend is not uncommon among women experiencing housing insecurity. "You talk to any woman – they just know that the whole idea of staying with someone is a sexual relationship. It's, 'Okay, you can stay here, but these are the terms.' Whenever a woman is vulnerable, it just happens. Women out here are vulnerable

restroom, you've got to improvise," said La Shawn. She said there are ways for the community to help: "People in the community who have a house or whatever, they could allow people to shower and do their grooming, like give each person 20-30 minutes to do basic grooming."



La Shawn Courtwright,  
Groundcover Vendor #56

And yet, the vendors I interviewed did not view these problems as major barriers to their work with Groundcover. The vendors I spoke to had a "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" mentality, and take full responsibility for their newspaper sales numbers. I asked La Shawn whether sales are more difficult for women: "It's more about the person, how you treat others. ... One way to change somebody's opinion or to influence them is by being your-



The heartbreaking reality of housing insecurity is that it does not cut women a break. The #MeToo movement brought new weight to the fact that one in five women will be raped during her lifetime, and one in three women will experience sexual violence. For many of us, the statistics only applied to "other people" before #MeToo. Now we have learned that these statistics reflect the experiences of our friends and family, and the women with whom we interact daily. Women who lack secure housing are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation during their lives.

Groundcover writer and vendor, La Shawn Courtwright, told me about one of several experiences she has had with sexual violence. "I was assaulted on camera [at a public housing establishment] and that person faced no consequences at all. One of the residents had been sexually harassing me and the people in charge didn't do anything. It escalated to a situation that became legal and I had to leave. I didn't feel safe."

Lit told me about her own similar experience: "One day when I was out selling papers a guy touched my butt inappropriately. ... We were in conversation and he ran his hands over my ass. That was one of those moments. *Am I doing women wrong not to report him?*

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"Sometimes it gets scary because I sell at night," said vendor Tabitha. "Being a woman, I'm not physically as strong as a man, and it gets hard when you have an encounter with drunk men who are trying to hit on you. 'Come home with me' – I've had that quite a few times. ... Being a woman has a lot of influence on what I do day-to-day. I don't like going around and selling at night without being with him [Joe Woods]. I'm not like some of the women out here that are used to it."



Tabitha L., Groundcover Vendor #360

Tabitha also recalled sexual harassment in a previous job. "When I worked at McDonald's, the manager used to always try to sleep with me, which got scary at times because I worked midnights so there weren't

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La Shawn explained, "I've had people who I knew and who were fine up until the point that I ask them, 'can I give you 20 bucks to stay the night,' and then they will try to sexually advance themselves. I feel like people try to take advantage of the vulnerability of me being a female, and if they want to do something, they will do that."

Other aspects of housing insecurity are also harder for women. Lit, Cindy and La Shawn all mentioned the problem of accessing sanitary facilities, which is necessary for feminine hygiene as well as restroom use. "If you don't have a room, you've got to find a public place to take care of your hygiene. And there are a lot of businesses that aren't tolerant of someone going into their place. And if you're by yourself, and there's no lock, and it's a public

not view these problems as major barriers to their work with Groundcover. The vendors I spoke to had a "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" mentality, and take full responsibility for their newspaper sales numbers. I asked La Shawn whether sales are more difficult for women: "It's more about the person, how you treat others. ... One way to change somebody's opinion or to influence them is by being yourself and working as hard as you can." Tabitha said there are times when she thinks she gets more sales because she is a woman. "It all depends on the customer. There are times that I feel like I get my sales because I am a woman, because I see the same person walk past Joe." She also added, "At night, I get more sales than Joe, because of guys turning up wanting to interact with females." Shelley believes that most customers "feel sorrier for a woman than a man," which increases sales for women.

Cindy had her own empowering words. "Let's put it this way: considering I've had 25 years of martial arts experience and four years of Ninjutsu – not that I would like to get attacked – but I think that person would have a hard time."

I asked Lit whether any of her daily challenges are harder because she is a woman. She replied, "Personally, overall it hasn't been any different

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## IN HER OWN WORDS

### Life being homeless as a small female

by Tabitha L.

#### Groundcover Vendor #360

Hello everybody, my name is Tabitha L. and I'm going to tell you just a little bit about what it's like being a homeless woman.

First off it is very scary because anything can happen to you at night. That is when a lot of people is around and drunk and they will try to have their way with you at any cost. My sister Crystal was just murdered out on the streets this summer, so like I said anything can happen to you. My sister was also raped by a man that she had trusted while she was asleep outside one night a few years back.

### Women vendors

continued from page 3

for me being a female vendor versus being a guy [vendor]. ... I haven't really experienced a lot of bias." Years ago, Lit saw that Joe Woods, experienced Groundcover vendor and Sales Manager, was selling more papers than her. "I made up my mind that I wasn't gonna sleep outside. So I asked Joe to show me how to sell the 10-dollar papers. I shadowed him for less than a day. After a couple hours I caught on. I would sell three 10-dollar papers and make the rest of it [money to pay for a hotel room] in tips."

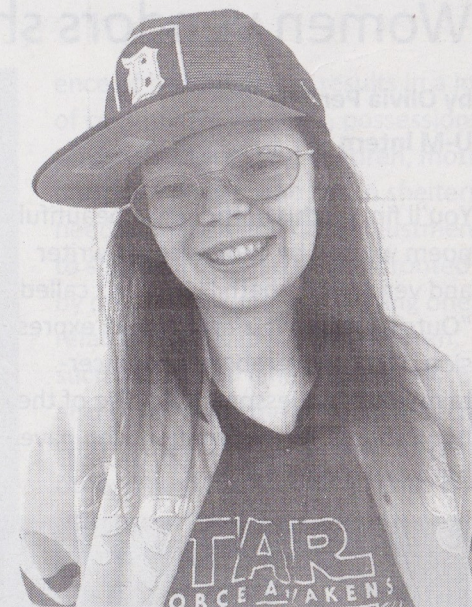
I lived under a bridge in Ypsilanti, like a lot of people already know who read my story back in the April issue of Groundcover. A lot of scary things happened to me at that time in my life. There was one time that I had to run for my life because a guy that I had prostituted with wanted his money back. Thank god that night I ran into a couple that was walking their dog and they saved me. There was another time that someone pulled a gun out on me.

But let me tell you about this time that just actually happened to me. A guy was riding his bike with a mask on and right away I had a weird feeling about him, but I kept on working and he ended up coming back to go in the

store I was selling around, so I decided to pitch him. Then it just got more and more scary by the minute. He started asking me if I knew where to get him some drugs, but then when I said no, he was trying to get me to prostitute with him. I trusted the guy that was working in the store so I asked him to keep an eye out on me until I could get ahold of [my friend] Joe. So when we were all standing outside smoking he kept insisting that he was going to walk with me, so thank god once again it didn't end bad. Joe came and got me and that was that.

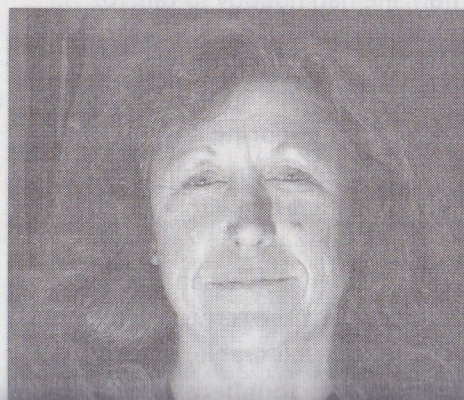
The point is that anything can happen and it is very scary out here in this world – definitely when you're homeless.

stream is really complex and there are no easy answers. We are burdened down by a lot of bureaucracy from agencies." Tabitha mentioned a need for more programs helping families stay together, an opinion shared by La Shawn: "The manager [of the public housing unit] told me my daughter couldn't visit me for three months. ... It's okay to have people intervene on your behalf when they have your best interest at heart, but at some point, they need to stay out of our personal lives." La Shawn was hoping to be reunited with her daughter, who she had not seen in 20 years. Her daughter had never been to the property, but



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the biggest thing. You've got to step up and walk on your own two feet. A woman can do anything a man can do. Gender really don't mean anything nowadays. Which I really like."



a lack of inclusion. First it was black women, now it's homeless women. We are not considered part of the sisterhood. It's time for our voices to be heard, in literature and demonstrations. People need to shine a light on us ... that's my goal, to expand on the #MeToo movement for homeless women. You've got black feminists versus white feminists. They're all ignoring the homeless women. I went to a black feminist think tank and my own sisters ignored me. I went to hear about how they could address bias against black homeless women. And I was wondering how they might assist us, how they might help their own.



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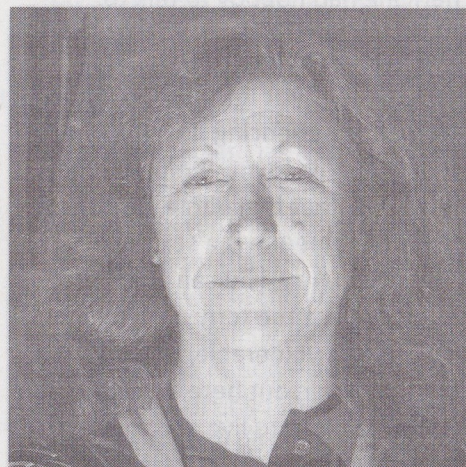
Lit explained that men like Joe have stepped up to the plate by helping other vendors, including women. "He said more or less, 'I'm making you my protégé' – which was really saying a lot. I didn't realize what a great salesperson Joe is. ... I was privileged to work with him. He gave me a salesman's bible. I feel like I'm part of a corporation – really, he runs it on that level and he motivates us."

Men can also help by looking out for female vendors when they are being harassed. Tabitha shared, "I got scared really bad the other day because it was really late, and some dude was asking me to give him drugs and trying to get

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Shelley D., Groundcover Vendor #22

That being said, selling newspapers is challenging. "For both males and females, it's just plain that we're not taken seriously enough by the common folk walking around downtown. Especially the younger crowd. ... I think it has to do with the Millennial thing. The mid-twenties through thirties have their own agenda and don't have time for extra stuff. They're caught up with what they're supposed to be doing to get ahead and be successful," said

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Shelley believes there are ways for Ann Arbor to better support homeless women: "Support affordable housing and pay particular attention to a group called Religious Action for Affordable Housing. I was a board member from 2014 to 2016." She said the government could form an affordable housing committee that includes homeless women. The committee would identify abandoned buildings that could be brought up to code and made livable. She added that city officials should be more aware of what causes individuals



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Cindy G., aka Kung Fu Panda, Groundcover Vendor #279



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Tabitha went on to say, "You really have to do it all on your own. That's



**Shelley D., Groundcover Vendor #22**

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Lit explained, "Being housing-vulnerable and getting back into the main-

Shawn: "The manager [of the public housing unit] told me my daughter couldn't visit me for three months. ... It's okay to have people intervene on your behalf when they have your best interest at heart, but at some point, they need to stay out of our personal lives." La Shawn was hoping to be reunited with her daughter, who she had not seen in 20 years. Her daughter had never been to the property, but the manager refused to allow her visit. It was Thanksgiving.

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Lit believes that the voices of homeless women have been left out of the greater women's movement. She reflected upon the Women's March in 2017, asking, "where was the woman experiencing homelessness up on that podium? Upper middle class women pass us by. There has always been

on us ... that's my goal, to expand on the #MeToo movement for homeless women. You've got black feminists versus white feminists. They're all ignoring the homeless women. I went to a black feminist think tank and my own sisters ignored me. I went to hear about how they could address bias against black homeless women. And I was wondering how they might assist us, how they might help their own. I was shut down in the meeting."



**Cindy G., aka Kung Fu Panda, Groundcover Vendor #279**

Cindy also had some thoughts on the greater women's movement. "There is a real huge stalemate right now between men and women. I think that the feminist movement has in some ways gone extremely far to put women in a specific category. But on the other

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## Crosstrax – adolescence shaped and recalled through Shania Twain's music

by Danielle Mack

Former Groundcover Vendor #5

Originally published February, 2013

Moving on from my last article, the next CD on this journey of old music, old memories, and relating to where things are now, is Shania Twain's album, "Come on Over." This CD came out in 1997, when I was 17 years old. This was my second non-Christian CD. I still remember walking into the Borders Books by my parents' house when this first came out. I saw the washed-out cover. Shania's bright-red lips and bright-red blouse really attracted me to the CD at first. The remarkable contrast was a huge draw to me. I previewed the CD, and loved all the strong feminist power ballads. It was a fast favorite. I bought it the second I had the money!

This CD came into my life at a time when I was still very much in the closet about who I was. I did not know what a transsexual was. There was a lot I still didn't know. I suppose you could say that Shania Twain in this CD was my Madonna. I was a sheltered child of a strong Christian family. Shania Twain's music in this CD was powerful, moving and more sensual than anything I had heard or seen before.

This CD was my escape from the shel-

I was helping to run sound at my church's college and young adults Sunday morning class when this CD was stolen in the winter of 2001-02. It was in my Pepsi CD case sitting up by the sound booth. I left to go use the restroom after class got out. By the time I got back up there someone had taken off with the case. All I had left of the CDs from that case were the ones I was using for the social time after class that happened to be in the CD player. I never saw it again. At the time, things were just too hectic in my life to go hunting down a new copy. My finances were tight and eventually I forgot about it. Every once in a while I would see it in a store, but never had the money for it. When I started this quest of self-reflection and self-reclamation, this CD was at the top of my list. It could be said this CD helped to energize my transition and push me out of the closet.

Back in 2005-06, when I was considering a career in drag performances, I seriously wanted to try being a Shania Twain impersonator. In winter of 2006, I came out to my parents, who promptly kicked me out of the house and did not want to deal with a transsexual child of theirs. Unfortunately, I was REALLY broke then; no job, living with friends, almost no possessions. That was when my bouts of homeless-

homeless with no job and no place to stay in a crashing economy.

Recalling this album brought all of that to the surface. It has some GREAT songs. One that I do not believe will ever lose any of its original meaning for me is the first song on the album, "Man I Feel Like A Woman." For me, growing up as a woman trapped in a man's body, this song put to words and music the embodiment of what I wanted to be, what I knew to be true about me on the inside. Now, as I near surgery, and have had the opportunity to experience college as a woman (as myself) and get some sort of a taste for what high school could have been had I been raised as the girl I knew I was, the song simply rings true, to the reality of how I feel and how much more I enjoy life now. The song just fits me; in the past, in the present, and probably in the future.

"Come On Over" used to have more appeal to me. The song talks of inviting others over to relax, recharge, and push on to pursuing their dreams. Before I was homeless, I had places to go to like my parents' home and my grandparents' where I could relax and pursue dreams and invite others over to do the same. My parents' door was open to helping people get on their feet, and while I stayed with them my door was similarly open. Now I am off



**"I was a woman being forced to live in a man's body just to survive. My life was full of metaphorical black eyes and blue tears," said Danielle.**

I highly suspect, though, that once I have settled into my new career and new home, this song will definitely get its old meaning back.

"Black Eyes, Blue Tears" used to evoke very strong feelings for me and deserves mentioning. I was a woman being forced to live in a man's body just to survive. My life was full of metaphorical black eyes and blue tears. I wanted to take a stand for myself, but not at the expense of a home and food in my tummy. Eventually, I did take that stand, and here I am today.



about who I was. I did not know what a transsexual was. There was a lot I still didn't know. I suppose you could say that Shania Twain in this CD was my Madonna. I was a sheltered child of a strong Christian family. Shania Twain's music in this CD was powerful, moving and more sensual than anything I had heard or seen before.

This CD was my escape from the sheltered life of a Christian boy into the life of a strong, assertive woman – I protected it with my life! I also listened to it a lot. This was the one CD to listen to whenever I would dress up and imagine myself as a woman. I would sit there in front of the mirror all dressed up, listen to the CD and think, talk to my female self, and ponder questions about who I was; why was this such a strong part of me, what it all meant.

I seriously wanted to try being a Shania Twain impersonator. In winter of 2006, I came out to my parents, who promptly kicked me out of the house and did not want to deal with a transsexual child of theirs. Unfortunately, I was REALLY broke then; no job, living with friends, almost no possessions. That was when my bouts of homelessness really began. I moved a lot of my stuff to storage, but soon I couldn't even afford that. Eventually I had to cut my losses, donate most of my stuff to charity, and move on. I had put off coming out to my parents as long as I did because I feared they would kick me out and want nothing to do with me if I did. I wanted to have a plan, and be out on my own by the time I came out to them. Obviously that failed, and my worst fears were realized. I was

ing others over to relax, recharge, and push on to pursuing their dreams. Before I was homeless, I had places to go to like my parents' home and my grandparents' where I could relax and pursue dreams and invite others over to do the same. My parents' door was open to helping people get on their feet, and while I stayed with them my door was similarly open. Now I am off on an adventure of my own, chasing after my biggest and most elusive dream: my surgery. I have no safe harbor such as my parents' or grandparents' home. All I can do is continue to hunt and work for that dream, as well as work on my degree. My housing options in college do not offer me the luxury of opening my door up to those struggling. My collegiate housing offers little in the way of shelter from life's storms, but it is what I have.

very strong feelings for me and deserves mentioning. I was a woman being forced to live in a man's body just to survive. My life was full of metaphorical black eyes and blue tears. I wanted to take a stand for myself, but not at the expense of a home and food in my tummy. Eventually, I did take that stand, and here I am today.

"Rock This Country!" is one song that I think has actually gained more and more meaning for me as time has gone by. As I learn to be more assertive and stand up for my beliefs, this song builds in meaning. With each article I write, with each paper and presentation I give, this song just builds in strength as I rock this country, educating people, and show them things they never thought of before. The world is changing around us, and we all need to learn to adapt.

## Women vendors

continued from page 4

hand, men have felt like they've lost power over women and they feel that they have to push more to get their point across. There is a kind of gridlock between men and women and it's a scary place to be because a lot of times there are people who get the backlash from that."

She also explained that as a member of the Kaska Dena tribe (of the Athabaskan-speaking First Nations group in the Yukon and northern British Columbia), her cultural tradition is matriarchal. "Man's purpose in a matriarchal society is procreation only. Beyond that, men have no say. ... The male ego goes out the window."

Although Cindy was not raised by the

tribe, its matriarchal values have influenced her world view. Tabitha also had an interesting perspective on women in society: "I believe a woman should be inside taking care of the family, in the house. The man's supposed to be outside working and providing, but it's not possible nowadays. Both parties need an income to raise a family."

Although Tabitha's beliefs about the

ideal role of women are not shared by many today, her realism strikes true. The women of Groundcover work hard to earn an income and make it on their own. Despite the constant threat of sexual violence, they are "outside, too" almost every day. Their work is a testament to the enormous strength of women, and their enduring motivation to survive and thrive.



## IN HER OWN VOICE

### Psychological impacts of being a homeless female

by La Shawn Courtwright  
Groundcover Vendor #56

We typically view being homeless as just that. Well, there's a lot more to it than just that.

Consider being a female who is homeless. When I look at how vulnerable females can be or perhaps are, we suffer psychologically, too. There's always the concern for safety for there are many foes that come in many different forms. I'm speaking of the mental, physical, and emotional aspects.

First of all, it's no fun to be outside in the cold when you have nowhere to go.

You have to sleep outside under a lot of covers to keep warm to survive and not die from hypothermia or exposure. It's very spooky because you can't be fully aware of your surroundings. You usually don't sleep well, and it's not a good idea to sleep too soundly on the streets. This is your state of mind constantly, unless you learn to navigate places that are safe and accommodating. This can make you tired and groggy.

The next challenge is to address your personal hygiene. You must carry



**"[I]f you seek shelter in certain places, like where there are activities that make you feel uncomfortable or threatened, *always leave*," cautions La Shawn C.**

some sort of large bag or have another means to carry items like soap, toothpaste, deodorant, etc. Now you have to map out where you can bathe your body in private. After this, you either carry things around or you have to figure out where you can safely store your belongings and have them readily accessible. Although the Delonis Center does have a storage policy, belongings can only be accessed at certain times. Toting around a lot of items is physically laborious, especially

on hilly streets. This is usually done before you can obtain a morning meal. I know I don't feel as confident if I'm subconsciously thinking I might not smell pleasant. This may have an effect on your self-esteem.

There are a lot of emotionally traumatizing situations you can end up being a part of if you seek shelter in certain places, like where there are activities that make you feel uncomfortable or threatened. Always leave. It's best not

to engage in negativity. For example, I went to sleep thinking I was with a friend. I woke up around 1 a.m. and discovered that my alleged friend was gone, not realizing that my computer went with them the night before. To add injury to insult, they denied it and you were the only two present. If that was not enough, I reported the incident to the police with all the required documentation to prove it was my property. After a said investigation of this crime, I was informed of the name and city location of the person in possession of my property and there were no charges filed or brought to the culprit. It's sad, horrible and unfortunate to know that crimes will and can be committed upon you and the people responsible won't be held accountable.

Things happen every day, especially in and on the streets. That to me gives a broader view of what being "homeless" really is. On the streets. This is only a small part of just being able to get your day going. Do you truly think that you can really imagine that? If so, then I've made my point. This is just the tip of the iceberg of your entire day. Thanks for hearing me out.

## Richer than Trump



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## Richer than Trump



by Elizabeth  
"Lit" Kurtz

Groundcover  
Vendor #159

*Originally published November, 2016*

I recall hearing a comment Trump made one day regarding his \$1 billion debt. Trump pointed out a homeless man to his daughter and said, "See that bum? He has a billion dollars more than me."

He observed that the person was a billion times richer than he was at the time. While he had no way of knowing the man's financial status, it turns out that, when it comes to the treatment of women, the homeless man may have had even more going in his favor than Trump actually knew. The treasure of character is often mined where monetary wealth is scarce.

I have found that even though the lack of physical boundaries on the street lends itself to language that, as we say, should not be used in the presence of women, men on the streets are generally respectful. There is always a certain demeanor when ladies are present.

There are, of course, those times and places where homeless women are virtually defenseless, such as when we have to camp out in remote spots only surrounded by men. There is invariably the man who will make unwanted advances and seek to take liberties. These are times when women have had to not only contend with fighting off the insects, but sleep with a guarded eye and fight off unwanted advances.

Yet, I have come to the realization that environment has little to do with the gender divide in our society that has become ever more apparent in recent decades. That glass ceilings are not limited to corporate America, but are evident in every stratum of society.

As in any part of society, there always seem to be a handful of men who have lagged behind the tremendous advances that have been made in women's equality – those men whose personalities perhaps will always cause them to seek out and exploit the differences between the sexes.

Yet at the end of the day, the men in my community are respectful, caring human beings who value a woman's place in society. They are able often to carry the weight of lugging our belongings around without imposing the male bravado often associated with gender. Like much of the rest of the world, these are men who despise lewdness and the unwanted advances made on women.

One night in particular stands out for me. I had locked my keys in my car and had to sleep in an area where there were mostly men. That night there was a man whose drinking had driven him to obnoxiously loud rants in the area where we were trying to sleep. It was

another man who, despite the loud rants of this individual, spoke in calming tones. He reminded the individual that people needed to sleep and the value of respecting others. He never judged the man who was behaving obnoxiously, but asked him to move on out of respect for everyone else. This went on for a seemingly interminable time before the man finally agreed to leave, his rantings echoing in the air as he stumbled away.

I drifted off into a fitful sleep, but awoke again shortly after to the calming voice of the man from the night before. The same gentleman who drove away the drunken individual also tapped on each blanket to make the other women and me aware that it was morning and the breakfast church would be opening soon. Before long we were all alert enough to gather our blankets and head to the breakfast church at St. Andrew's for our first meal of the day.

see TRUMP, page 10



## The Life of Miriam Lindsay – A tribute

by Susan Beckett  
Publisher

*Originally published June, 2018*

Miriam first heard about Groundcover while eating dinner at the Delonis Center. Organizers were trying to determine if there was sufficient interest in starting a street newspaper. She was intrigued. She joined in a photo shoot on her way out and once her picture appeared in an ad and on the mast-head, her allegiance to Groundcover was cemented.

She quickly embraced the Groundcover mission. "I've been homeless before and self-esteem is important. I'm blessed and it's given me more self-esteem," said Miriam. She also valued how Groundcover has become a mutually supportive community and reports she had been "keeping an eye" on another vendor. "He's not a bad person. He just has a drinking problem. This paper's giving him self-esteem and he's doing better, getting help. I'm learning from Tony how to sell even better."

"I've been selling since issue one and I like it. I enjoy talking to a variety of people and what it does for the homeless. I am amazed at the readers' curiosity and anticipation for future issues. Our last issue sold out in two weeks! I'm looking forward to being out



**"Each month, out of my own money, I try to add something to my business equipment," Miriam exclaimed. She added a cooler and cart for transporting and protecting her papers, her sign and Groundcover sweatshirts in a variety of colors she had custom-made for her at Elmo's.**

still retained all her permits and hoped to get it out again.

Diagnosed with epilepsy at birth, Miriam's life normalcy ended after third grade when she was committed to Pontiac State Hospital. Epilepsy was considered a mental illness in the 1950s and no attempt was made to further educate her. Miriam continued her own education by reading the Merriam Webster Dictionary she found in the hospital. There were no education

[In addition to being a dedicated Groundcover News vendor, Miriam worked hard to advocate for her own Social Security Disability payments.]

Miriam wanted this article published because, "I want people to know how the system fabricates and handles situations that they don't want to deal with. For seven years, I told them and explained my situation but they demanded proof. Now that I got the proof, they are procrastinating and

After several run-ins at school, she was taken from the third grade and sent to Pontiac State Mental Hospital where she received no further education and was diagnosed as "incorrigible." Miriam had health insurance through her father's company and she believes the hospital kept her, in large part, because of the payments it was receiving. Among the bizarre and damaging experiences she had was being prescribed cigarettes at the age of 12 while she was a patient at Pontiac.

She attempted escape at Pontiac, and from Ionia (to which she was transferred at age 12, while it was a hospital for the criminally insane) and finally successfully fled from Caro. Miriam lived on the streets and survived the best she could with no identity papers and only a third grade education, on top of a gripping fear that she would be caught and returned to yet another institution. She was in contact with her mother who arranged for a family friend, Mr. Harris, to bring her Dilantin, the drug she depended on for suppressing her epilepsy attacks.

The Social Security Administration claimed that during those four years she had healed and was therefore not a continuously disabled child entitled to survivor benefits. Miriam persisted until she found a good lawyer to take on her case. When he first filed



doing better, getting help. I'm learning from Tony how to sell even better."

"I've been selling since issue one and I like it. I enjoy talking to a variety of people and what it does for the homeless. I am amazed at the readers' curiosity and anticipation for future issues. Our last issue sold out in two weeks! I'm looking forward to being out there in the rain and sleet. I've got my snowsuit, umbrella, gloves, boots and laminated sign and I'm happy to do it. I feel Groundcover is my job so I'm making my own uniform. I'm so proud of Groundcover! Each month, out of my own money, I try to add something to my business equipment," Miriam preached. She added a cooler and cart for transporting and protecting her papers, her sign, and Groundcover sweatshirts in a variety of colors she had custom made for her at Elmo's.

"I am an entrepreneur," Miriam declared, and a self-educated woman. Her last venture was "Nawnie's Dog Gone Hot Dogs," named by her grandkids. A loss of peripheral vision, a side-effect of the anti-seizure medication she has taken since infancy, left her legally blind and unable to drive. From 2006 until 2008 she employed a driver to haul her hot dog stand to the U-M Diag area where she often cleared \$200 - \$300 on a weekend day. Once she no longer had a reliable driver, her hot dog stand was idled, though she

Diagnosed with epilepsy at birth, Miriam's life normalcy ended after third grade when she was committed to Pontiac State Hospital. Epilepsy was considered a mental illness in the 1950s and no attempt was made to further educate her. Miriam continued her own education by reading the Merriam Webster Dictionary she found in the hospital. There were no educational opportunities either when she was transferred to the hospitals in Ionia or Cato, so at 18 she ran away.

She lived on the streets in Saginaw, Oakland County, California and Pontiac. A man attempted to rob her in Pontiac and she sprayed him with the bleach she carried in a spray bottle for self-protection. She was arrested for felonious assault with an illegal substance and spent seven years in prison. It was during this time she was declared legally blind and given her first cane. She was released in 2004 to the custody of her daughter who lives in Washtenaw County and now lives in her own apartment in Ypsilanti, delighting in visits with her grandchildren.

"I want to be successful and more than anything, I want to see Groundcover be successful," Miriam proclaimed, "because it tells the truth. So people should unhardened their hearts. People need to have shelter in all weather, not just when it's colder than 40 degrees."

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Miriam sued the Social Security Administration for payments from her father's Social Security following his death, as she was his only disabled child. She was known to the system since she had applied for Social Security Disability at the age of 22, four years after she escaped from Caro State Hospital. The courts ruled in her favor on four out of the five steps to proving her claim and the remaining step hinged on proving that she was still disabled during the four years when she was on the run, fearing a return to the hospitals that had kept her prisoner for the previous decade.

Miriam's odyssey began long ago when she suffered a series of Grand Mal seizures at the age of seven. They left her unconscious and hospitalized with little chance for recovery. Though she did awaken after several days, her brain, already beset with epilepsy, had suffered further damage that affected her ability to control her emotions.

the drug she depended on for suppressing her epilepsy attacks.

The Social Security Administration claimed that during those four years she had healed and was therefore not a continuously disabled child entitled to survivor benefits. Miriam persisted until she found a good lawyer to take on her case. When he first filed in December of 2011, he was told it would take six to eighteen months to get a hearing. Meanwhile, Miriam tracked down Mr. Harris, who swore in an affidavit that he had continuously provided her with Dilantin during that time. She further procured testimony from a renowned doctor from the University of Michigan that the kind of damage evident in her brain could not have gone away. When these documents were recently presented to the court, they were told that there were still 18 months worth of cases ahead of Miriam's.

In Miriam's initial attempt to rectify the situation seven years ago, she represented herself before a judge in Texas with whom she communicated over a flat-screen television. He told her he was setting her case aside and that when it was recalled, he wanted her to have a lawyer, because she had a good case and stood to recover 40 years of back pay.

see MIRIAM LINDSAY, page 9



## Why I play violin on the streets

by Lily Au

MISSION Contributor

*Originally published July 2010*

Why does that woman always play violin on the streets? The posters on the wall tell you the answer, "Shelter is full. Homeless Camp has been busted three times within a year. Sanctioned land is asked for on humanitarian grounds." Homeless people are arrested. Do you know that it is illegal to be homeless?

I was shocked when I first heard that people have been sleeping out in the cold. I was furious knowing that for years some of the homeless slept on chairs in the shelter. I didn't know how to respond when the homeless man showed his leg, swollen from deep vein thrombosis.

M.I.S.S.I.O.N. (Michigan Itinerant Shelter System Interdependent and Out of Necessity) members went to address the Ann Arbor City Council many times. In response, in December 2009, the chairs in the Warming Center were replaced with sleeping cots. Still, sleeping in a crowded room that is quiet from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. does not afford the kind of rest that leaves you ready to interview.

The root of the problem is, "Where is our affordable housing?" Several years

over 100 low-income housing units (the old YMCA) and they have not been replaced. Some of the tenants from the old Y are still sleeping on the streets. On the other hand, due to limited funds, the shelter has no choice but to set a two-week stay limit for local homeless people at the Warming Center.

In addition to the Warming Center, there are places which can house people for three-month stays. The reality is that the real demand for shelter is over ten times what the facility can provide.

We have several tent cities in Ann Arbor. Some are by the highway, under the bridge. Some are in the wooded areas. "Camp Take Notice\*" now has over 25 homeless campers hiding there. We call them the "Invisible Community." They're still living without lighting, electricity, running water or any facilities.

People might ask, "Lily, you've lots of free time to help out the homeless issue." "No, I'm the mom of two young sons. I'm struggling to balance the time. Being a mom, it sharpens our feelings of seeing people cold, wet, hungry, sick and in pain."

Others say, "Hey, they're bums. That's the lifestyle they choose!" I'd respond, "The longer you're with them, the

more you will know the truth!"

Based on research data from Washtenaw County, 20-25 percent of the homeless population are veterans and another 30-35 percent are mentally ill, disabled or living with chronic diseases. There are also unemployed people, working poor and those fleeing domestic violence and sexual assault among them. Substance abuse is also an issue for about 20-25 percent of homeless people.

When I played violin on the streets, people talked to me, and then they knew that the state had shut down many medical facilities for the mentally ill and put patients on the street. That's why I advocate for emergency housing. If we don't lend a hand to the most vulnerable, they will end up chronically homeless.

People might say, "Housing is the job of Department of Housing & Urban Development, as they hold the federal funds." Some might say, "That's the job of the city, as the city government is in charge of the city development, planning & facilities." I'd like to say that it's *everyone's* job. In Romans 13:8, the Bible says, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

Last month, I met Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm by chance. I asked



"Is it possible to make it a law to allocate a certain percentage of the City budget each year for Emergency and Affordable Housing?" She replied, "Yes, you can if you can get the community on board!"

So, next time, when you see me play violin on the street, please pick up and sign my petition. Your signature can help free many people from the threat of hypothermia and frostbite and keep them dry on rainy nights. I love Isaiah 58 very much. That's the chapter which strengthens our faith community to work more for the vulnerable. I'm honored to be one of them – and you?

\* *Camp Take Notice was a community of homeless Ann Arbor citizens that was closed down by state officials in 2012.*



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## Aretha Franklin – a testament to the black Baptist church

by Elizabeth "Lit" Kurtz

Groundcover Vendor #159

Like Aretha Franklin, I grew up in the black Baptist church. As a matter of fact, I lived next door to the parsonage where I saw families come and go over the years. What impacted me the most was seeing the sons and daughters seemingly embody the gifts of their fathers.

So it was with Aretha, who at four played the piano at her father's church. Her natural musical talent, undoubtedly a gift from above, was further strengthened by growing up in the environment of the church.

Even for those of us who weren't preacher's kids, the black Baptist church fostered a wealth of experiences. From Whitney Houston to Aretha, the range of musical experiences it inspired led to

many big-time musical successes.

So in 1998, when the media was puzzled by Aretha Franklin's standing in for opera tenor Luciano Pavarotti during a Grammy performance of Puccini's "Nessun Dorma," I was unfazed, knowing that women tenors are part of the black Baptist tradition where music ranges from spirituals to the classics.

In my own church I recall women such as Hilda Miller and Mildred Henderson, who seamlessly held down the tenor section of the church's choir. Not only did they sing countless gospel melodies, but also classical cornerstones such as Handel's "Messiah."

This was the rich heritage that nourished the spirit of Aretha Franklin. As is the tradition of the black Baptist church, duties range from teaching a Sunday School class to taking the place of an absent singer.

So, when the famous tenor Pavarotti fell ill, Aretha undoubtedly knew her role in making the performance complete. She quickly stepped in with her well-trained female Baptist tenor voice to help make that night a success.

Aretha's foray into secular music caused some to take pause and wonder whether she left the church. Yet it was her father, Reverend C.L. Franklin – the famous Baptist minister and civil rights activist – who in a recorded live performance of his daughter singing "Amazing Grace," exclaimed, "Aretha never left the Church!"

She will be remembered for many things, but her commitment to the arts and her passion to give back a wholesome musical experience to the church and beyond exemplifies Aretha Franklin, the "Queen of Soul."

What began at New Bethel Baptist



Like many other black artists, the late Aretha Franklin developed her musical prowess in the black Baptist church.

Church on the formerly-named Linwood Street in Detroit under Reverend Franklin brought us the incomparable Aretha Franklin, whose soulful voice not only impacted her own home church but the entire world.



## Justice or not

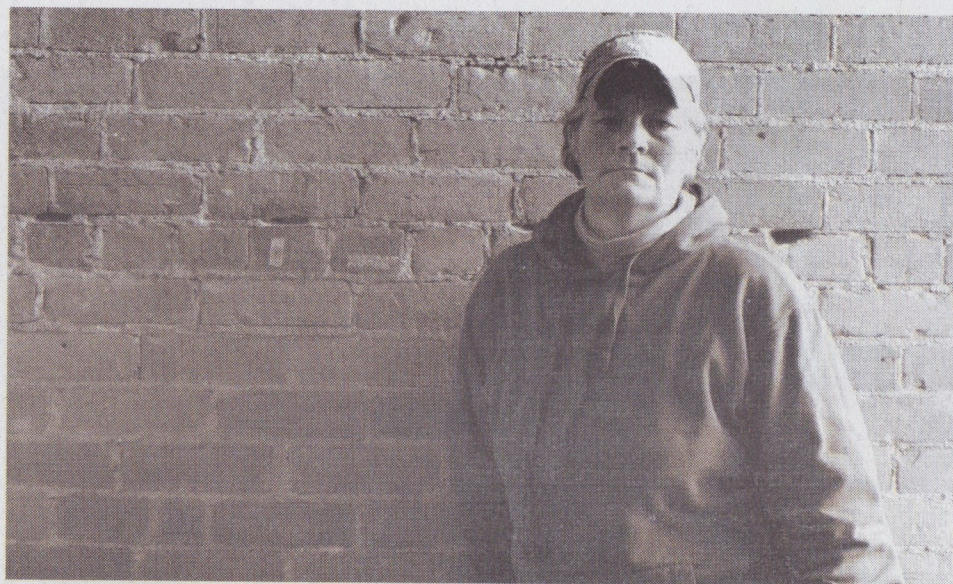
by Peggy Donham  
Groundcover Vendor #98

*Originally published November, 2014*

I want to share a very private situation in my life that I have been dealing with for these past few months. I've disclosed this only to a few close friends, in part, because I feel ashamed and embarrassed about what has happened to me. And I want to believe it's not my fault, but I can't help but feel it is.

I think if you have some knowledge of my history you may understand the emotions and feelings I've felt while I go through this situation. I've spent the past 26 years in and out of therapy, dealing with a childhood filled with incest, rape, abuse and molestation. From three years old, through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood I've suffered repeated abuses. Sharing my story, my hope is that you understand my frustration with the judicial system. And most important, in some way my story may help other people in similar situations.

On what seemed a normal day selling Groundcover News at the People's Food Co-op, as I do most days of the week, I was sweeping the sidewalk and picking up trash, with my back turned to a man I know – a man who has a history of being an alcoholic on a daily basis – who walked up behind me. He then pinched my butt and rubbed his hand up and down my leg and behind many times. I



**The feeling of powerlessness is one of the worst after-effects of sexual abuse. The system repeatedly let Peggy down.**

broom in my hand and I told him if he didn't get away from me I would hit him with the broom.

I wanted to hit him, but I didn't. He was more intoxicated than usual and said, "I was just saying good morning." At this point, many emotions erupted from my past, my face and head felt hot, and all I was thinking was, "protect yourself."

When I'm in an extreme emotional place like this, it's painful and very difficult to calm my emotions. As if every emotional nerve was firing, my anxiety level was high and I was afraid of having an anxiety attack. For over an hour afterward, I felt tormented with anger and past emotions of helplessness. I thought I needed to do something, yet I felt frozen by my emotions. A friend

telling me calling the police would be a positive action.

After explaining to the police what happened, the man was charged by the prosecuting attorney's office with fourth degree sexual assault.

Then came the court date. I was very nervous and anxious entering the court room. I thought he would be charged and sentenced with the original charge, but I was in for an awakening I didn't see coming. While I waited, a woman from Safe House introduced herself and told me she had to be in another court room during my case and would not be available. Then I was taken to a small room off the court room with the prosecuting attorney, the detective from the case, and a woman who worked for

I want to happen? I said, "I want him to be accountable for his actions."

It was then that the prosecutor took ten minutes to explain that I needed to consider that the original charge could cause a long, drawn-out court trial that could end in this man being found not guilty of any charge; that he would have to register as a sex offender and how difficult it would be for him to get a job or housing. As I sat there, I felt my anger rise, completely alone and backed into a corner with no choice but to agree to a lesser charge of assault and battery. I felt completely powerless in a situation I counted on feeling powerful in.

Sitting in the courtroom afterward, listening to the judge speak to this man, tears ran down my face. The more I tried not to cry, the more tears I had. I felt that the only thing I could do was run from that court room. Needless to say, I left very disappointed.

I struggle with my emotions around this. I'm angry with the prosecuting attorney, the detective, Safe House, the court system, and sadly, myself. I know my residual feelings go deeper than just this one incident. I understand I had a choice, but it felt as if I had no choice but to go along with what the prosecuting attorney persuaded me to believe.

It was difficult for me to expose myself by revealing what happened to me. I'm embarrassed this happened and I struggle with feeling angry towards myself, because I want to believe this wasn't my fault. My hope is that my article may



On what seemed a normal day selling Groundcover News at the People's Food Co-op, as I do most days of the week, I was sweeping the sidewalk and picking up trash, with my back turned to a man I know – a man who has a history of being an alcoholic on a daily basis – who walked up behind me. He then pinched my butt and rubbed his hand up and down my leg and behind many times. I turned around, very angry, holding the

When I'm in an extreme emotional place like this, it's painful and very difficult to calm my emotions. As if every emotional nerve was firing, my anxiety level was high and I was afraid of having an anxiety attack. For over an hour afterward, I felt tormented with anger and past emotions of helplessness. I thought I needed to do something, yet I felt frozen by my emotions. A friend helped me out of this petrified place,

and sentenced with the original charge, but I was in for an awakening I didn't see coming. While I waited, a woman from Safe House introduced herself and told me she had to be in another court room during my case and would not be available. Then I was taken to a small room off the court room with the prosecuting attorney, the detective from the case, and a woman who worked for the prosecutor. He asked me, what did

this one incident. I understand I had a choice, but it felt as if I had no choice but to go along with what the prosecuting attorney persuaded me to believe.

It was difficult for me to expose myself by revealing what happened to me. I'm embarrassed this happened and I struggle with feeling angry towards myself, because I want to believe this wasn't my fault. My hope is that my article may help someone who reads this.

## Tribute to Groundcover Vendor Miriam Lindsay

**continued from page 7**

"Most people would give up on something like this," said Miriam. "What they don't realize is that I have nothing to lose. They never thought I'd keep playing with these papers."

"Do the right thing," Miriam urged the Social Security Administration. "If the shoe were on the other foot, you'd force me to do the right thing. Now, you do the right thing."

Miriam Lindsay passed away on May 2, 2018. She left her mark on the Groundcover community.

Miriam Lindsay was one of a kind, well-known among business owners and downtown patrons from Ypsilanti to Ann Arbor. She was Groundcover

News Vendor #6 and was instrumental in getting us off the ground, recruiting other vendors and drawing in customers with her passion and success.

She was a strong-headed woman who spoke her mind. Miriam was also generous and strove to uplift her community. One Christmas she gave 20 copies of Groundcover to every active Groundcover vendor. Her friend Griffith Dick (Griff) recalled her story of her quick tongue admonishing three young men on Washtenaw Ave. about their appearance and glorification of prison culture. She told them they were better than that and should take care to show it. In retrospect, she was relieved she left uninjured. Months later, one of those men, now well-groomed, recognized her and thanked her for speaking to them that way. He

said he'd never had anyone in his life who cared how he turned out and that she had made a difference with him.

Appearances mattered to Miriam. She was always neat and clean and took pains to present herself well. She took it on herself to get new winter gear emblazoned with the Groundcover logo by Elmo at his T-shirt shop. She went to Kolossos to create a professional looking laminated sign explaining Groundcover News to potential customers. She wanted everyone to know that when she was out selling Groundcover, she was working.

Miriam prided herself on overcoming the obstacles she faced from a lifetime of epilepsy and the privations she suffered as a result. She valued learning and educated herself at every opportu-

nity. She participated in classes and counseling to control her anger. Her dog Roscoe proved the most effective therapy. Miriam took exceptional care of him and her concern for Roscoe helped her avoid confrontations.

Roscoe is now back with Miriam's daughter Nikki and the twin granddaughters of whom she was so proud. Miriam held off the cancer long enough to learn that the twins will both be attending the University of Michigan this fall.

Miriam is survived by her daughter Nicole Johnson and son Ramon Lindsey of Ypsilanti and two siblings, older sister Merquise Parker of Chicago, Ill. and younger brother Mechelle Lindsey of Corcoran, Calif.



## Spare a dime or buy a paper

by Shelley DeNeve

Groundcover Vendor #22

*Originally published July, 2011*

I want to voice my observations and concerns about the difference between Groundcover News (GCN) vendors and panhandlers. Why is it so easy for the public just to hand a panhandler money? However, when a Groundcover vendor asks the general population to buy a paper, the same people say, "No, thanks." I want to point out something that happens all too often. As people are walking by, they suddenly are interrupted by a panhandler. While I stand there with papers and watch the people give them money, I think to myself, "Why not buy from me? We are offering news and information in exchange for a \$1 donation. Why are you giving to someone who wants a handout? What do they offer?"

I feel angry and frustrated when the public chooses them over me. I have talked to other vendors about this. Many of us feel it's unfair and it defeats our purpose. Most initially feel hurt or angry when this happens. For some, it leads to feeling depressed. Others channel their reaction and conclude that the potential patron needs educating about the paper and its purpose, and set about trying to engage



**Though she works three jobs now, Shelley relied on Groundcover sales during the recession and was frustrated that some people gave to panhandlers instead of buying from her.**

nity in that it helps people understand what low-income and homeless people go through. Reason three, I like talking with people and I feel like I'm doing something important while I look for another job.

For the record, GCN vendors are not panhandlers. This is a legitimate business! We may not sound as professional as a person with a regular job or higher education. We are just down-to-earth people trying to reestablish

ing-challenged situation by giving them an opportunity to sell GCN instead of asking for handouts. If I were the passerby, I would rather buy the paper from the vendor than just hand someone money. If I were rich, I would make a conscious effort to help both. It's ultimately up to you, the public, how you would like to help. Of course, you are reading this article, so you chose to buy the paper – thank you!

When you give a panhandler money,

the publication for a dollar. We have to organize, plan and coordinate our sales efforts. We are not just asking for a handout; we are asking for a hand up (with the \$1.00 donation, of course!). Why do many people say "No, thank you" to GCN vendors? Does the public think we are like panhandlers? I get that impression a lot!

When I go out and sell GCN on the weekends, it is really difficult to sell. I don't know if it's the mindset of the crowd, or because some of the crowd are visitors and feel uncomfortable about buying it. Another crowd I find hard to reach is the younger people, whether or not they are students. I know they're busy with school and other activities – but is it partly because they have an agenda to party all night? I just want to say we need more college-aged people buying GCN. You are our future, and this is something that needs your attention. I want to reiterate that GCN vendors are legitimate business people.

In conclusion, I want to say that I appreciate your business and thoroughly enjoy talking with the public. Just to let you know, I can't talk too long since people are passing by and I may miss an opportunity to open another person's heart and mind. Thank you for your generosity and thoughtful com-



public chooses them over me. I have talked to other vendors about this. Many of us feel it's unfair and it defeats our purpose. Most initially feel hurt or angry when this happens. For some, it leads to feeling depressed. Others channel their reaction and conclude that the potential patron needs educating about the paper and its purpose, and set about trying to engage the person in conversation.

I sell Groundcover for three reasons. I need cash to buy everyday items my family needs, because the amount covered by food stamps isn't enough and both my husband and I are currently unemployed. Reason two, Groundcover is an essential part of our commu-

with people and I feel like I'm doing something important while I look for another job.

For the record, GCN vendors are not panhandlers. This is a legitimate business! We may not sound as professional as a person with a regular job or higher education. We are just down-to-earth people trying to reestablish ourselves amidst a crisis in our lives. We also are serious about helping the public to reach a mindset of what GCN is all about. It's about helping the community become informed about poverty and homelessness in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and other areas in Washtenaw County. It is also about helping people in a homeless or hous-

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When you give a panhandler money, do you wonder where your money goes to? We can only guess, right? When you buy GCN from the vendor, it goes to that specific vendor. The vendors buy papers from GCN at 25 cents per copy. Then the vendor sells

business people.

In conclusion, I want to say that I appreciate your business and thoroughly enjoy talking with the public. Just to let you know, I can't talk too long since people are passing by and I may miss an opportunity to open another person's heart and mind. Thank you for your generosity and thoughtful comments on how GCN and its vendors are conducting their business.

## Richer than Trump

continued from page 6

As I recall, it was Chaucer who during the Middle Ages made the world aware that gentility, the quality of having good character and high moral standing, was not based on one's social standing. He shocked the sensibilities of the medieval individual with the realization that aristocracy did not equal gentility and that this quality could be found among peasants as well.

And so it is with Trump. Neither money nor social standing has prevented him from treating women with disrespect. Trump's attitude towards women shows that even the person perceived to be the lowliest citizen in the world can not only be richer than him, but behave with more decency towards people of the opposite sex; that a man sleeping under a bridge can display the qualities of gentility rarely associated with his class in life.

We should all take note that whether sleeping under a bridge or in pursuit of the White House, respect for women is not established by one's station in life, but in the inherent character of the individual.



Clockwise from top-left: *Women's Voices* Special Editor Olivia Perfetti, Assistant Editor Kolin Biggs, Photographer Peter Beyer, Editor Andrew Nixon



## Women's March rally addresses inequality in opportunity, representation

by Laurie Wechter

*Originally published February, 2018*

An estimated 3,000 women and their allies gathered on the University of Michigan's central campus on January 20, 2018, as women rallied in cities across the country and world over the weekend. The rallies, attended by over one million people in this country alone, aimed to promote the continuance of initiatives that grew out of the historic first International Women's March on Washington one year ago. At that time, Women's Marches took place in cities and towns across the globe, including a march of over 11,000 in Ann Arbor.

Claire Cepuran, co-founder of Progressives at U-M and co-organizer of the 2017 and 2018 rallies wrote online, "We will uphold and protect the rights of all, in a time when those rights are being called into question."

The national organizers of the 2017 march and continuing movement have embraced a concept called intersectionality that links sexism to racism to poverty to homelessness and so on. The interrelatedness of issues facing all ages and genders was apparent in the array of causes touted by the musicians and speakers at the rally.

A relevant example of these interfaces can be found in the social categorizations of people who are homeless. "Approximately half of the homeless

of homeless mothers do not have a high school diploma."

Facts of this kind have led Women's March groups to call for changes in government policy that equalizes the rights and opportunities for all citizens.

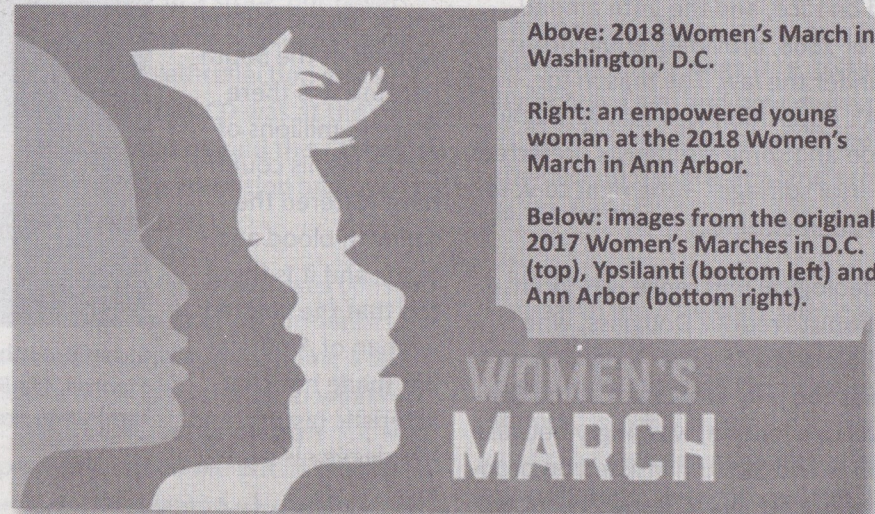
At Saturday's event, candidates and current political officeholders spoke in strong terms about the mid-term elections in November and the necessity that women get themselves onto the ballots at all levels and get themselves to the polls. While women account for more than 50 percent of the population, women comprise less than 20 percent of U.S. House members and 22 percent of the U.S. Sen-



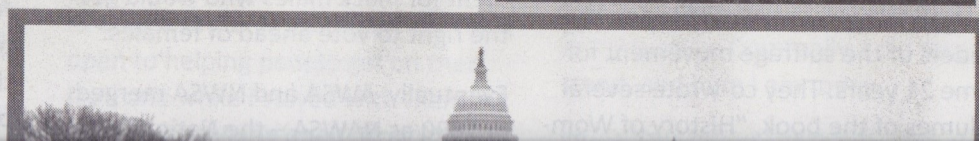
Above: 2018 Women's March in Washington, D.C.

Right: an empowered young woman at the 2018 Women's March in Ann Arbor.

Below: images from the original 2017 Women's Marches in D.C. (top), Ypsilanti (bottom left) and Ann Arbor (bottom right).



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onality that links sexism to racism to poverty to homelessness and so on. The interrelatedness of issues facing all ages and genders was apparent in the array of causes touted by the musicians and speakers at the rally.

A relevant example of these interfaces can be found in the social categorizations of people who are homeless. "Approximately half of the homeless population in this country are families with children. Among homeless families, 90 percent are female-headed," as stated by Legal Momentum (the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund website). When race is added to the mix, "Families of color are overrepresented in the homeless population. Nationally, 43 percent are African-American; 15 percent are Hispanic; 38 percent are White, non-Hispanic and three percent are Native American," according to **Greendoors.org**, a housing advocacy website.

"Although gender inequality in the workplace impacts all women, the way it impacts homeless women is rarely talked about," cites Legal Momentum. "The financial hardship associated with homelessness is a burden often only lifted by stable income, which usually means stable employment. But more than half of all homeless mothers do not have a high school diploma, meaning that programs that help homeless women gain job skills or more education are essential." According to **Greendoors.org**, "Fifty-three percent

ate. Women's activists find it essential that women run for office. The Las Vegas 2018 Women's March organizers started up the organization Power to the Polls to harness the energy of the marches, register new voters and engage impacted communities.

State Sen. Rebekah Warren, D-Ann Arbor, discussed the worries raised by last year's Presidential election. She added, however, that she's seen a significant difference over one short year, saying, "I'm not quite as worried as I was last year. In fact, I'm standing in front of you incredibly hopeful." She said that her hope was built on the election of minority candidates to local and state governments and on the activism she has seen all around her.

The Women's March rally in Ann Arbor was coordinated by Cepuran, and Washtenaw County Commissioner Michelle Deatrick. Speakers included activist Michelle Elizabeth Brown; poet Zilka Joseph; Rowan Conybeare, of the U-M College Democrats; Lily Buday, of the Progressives at U-M; domestic violence survivor Nicole Beverly; state Rep. Donna Lasinski, D-Scio Township, and Rebekah Warren, D-Ann Arbor.





## The deep roots of #MeToo: A history of the Suffragette movement

by Will Shakespeare

Groundcover Vendor #258

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the World. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

— Margaret Mead

Historians describe the Women's Suffrage Movement as the most significant achievement by women during the Progressive Era, that period between the 1890s and 1920s. While abolitionists, activists and other supporters played significant roles, the Seneca Falls (New York) Convention of 1848 was viewed as "the meeting that launched the suffrage movement."

As it happened, Lucretia Mott invited Elizabeth Cady Stanton to have tea with four friends. The five women in upstate New York had an intense conversation about women's issues and agreed to convene the first Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls. Over 200 women were in attendance. Forty men, including abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, participated in the Convention.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony are generally credited as the leaders of the suffrage movement for some 21 years. They co-wrote several volumes of the book, "History of Women's Suffrage."

After Seneca Falls, suffragist leaders such as Lucy Stone and Paulina Wright Davis led a series of Women's Rights Conventions in Worcester, Mass., in the 1850s and 1860s. Most suffrage leaders, black and white, were aligned with the abolitionist movement of the 19th century.

By 1869, Anthony and Stanton led the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), while the American Woman Suffragist Association (AWSA) was led by Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Blackwell and Julia Ward Howe. AWSA supported the 15th Amendment as was written. NWSA opposed the 15th Amendment of 1870, ending voting discrimination based on race, and the 14th amendment of 1868, providing equal protection under the law. The reason for NWSA's opposition was that Anthony, Stanton and some suffragists preferred "universal suffrage" — the right to vote for *all* adult citizens.

The ideological difference was intense. Abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, who called himself a "women's rights man" and was the only black man at the Seneca Fall Convention, was angry because "Anthony and Stanton insisted on property ownership and a literacy requirement for black males who would get the right to vote ahead of females."

Eventually, AWSA and NWSA merged in 1890 as NAWSA — the National

Anna Julia Cooper, who had a master's degree in mathematics, also gave a moving speech that resonates with many of today's black women scholars. The title was, "Only Black Women Can Say When and Where I Enter." Cooper also gave an impressive speech at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair in support of black women suffragists. In it she said, "I speak for the colored women of the South because it is there that the millions of blacks in this country have watered the soil with blood and tears, and it is there too that the colored woman of America has made her characteristic history, and her destiny is evolving."

African American women had to contend with the sexism of being denied the right to vote, but also the racism of some white suffragists. They peti-



Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ida B. Wells and Lucy Stone (left to right, top to bottom) were prominent suffragist leaders.

### War and progress

When Alice Paul of NAWSA organized the famous march of 1913 to demonstrate against President-Elect Woodrow Wilson in Washington, D.C., Mary



200 women were in attendance. Forty men, including abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, participated in the Convention.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony are generally credited as the leaders of the suffrage movement for some 21 years. They co-wrote several volumes of the book, "History of Woman Suffrage," a monumental history of the women's suffrage movement published in six volumes between 1881-1922.

Anthony and Stanton complemented each other. Anthony excelled at organizing and Stanton had an aptitude for intellectual matters and writing. Stanton wrote speeches that Anthony delivered. Because of Anthony's community mobilization and speaking skills, she became the iconic personality of the movement for women's legal, social and political rights. Historians give equal recognition to Stanton.

But even well-known women reformers in the suffrage movement could not get politicians to listen to them because they had not secured the right to vote. For several decades, they lobbied Congress to introduce a constitutional amendment. Anthony was rebuked when she tried to speak at the New York State Temperance Convention. The men told her that "ladies have been invited to listen and learn, and not to speak."

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Eventually, AWSA and NWSA merged in 1890 as NAWSA – the National American Woman Suffrage Association – with Anthony as the leader.

### **Black Women Pioneers**

Many historians and feminist writers have said that people who told the story of the suffrage movement overlooked the contributions of African-American women pioneers who helped to secure women's right to vote. Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, Harriett Tubman, Mary M. Bethune, Ella Baker and several notable black suffragists worked as hard as Anthony and Stanton to achieve the right to vote. They fought alongside the lower-class women. They did not see the suffrage movement as a movement for only middle-class whites.

Born into slavery and deprived of a formal education, Sojourner Truth nevertheless became a particularly influential figure in the movement. Her most famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851), was delivered extemporaneously and became widely known during the Civil War.

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African American women had to contend with the sexism of being denied the right to vote, but also the racism of some white suffragists. They petitioned, they lobbied, they gave speeches, they organized, they mobilized and they marched in parades. As journalist Michelle Barnard said in The Washington Post of March 3, 2013, "Despite the tremendous risk, African American women marched for suffrage, too." Black female reformers and suffragists soldiered on.

Frances Ellen Harper said, "No race can afford to neglect the enlightenment of its mothers." Exclusionary practices were obvious and ubiquitous. Black women worked very hard to organize and have their own groups.

In 1896, the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAW) merged with the National League of Colored Women (NLCW) to form the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) with suffragist leader Mary Church Terrell as the first president. NACW maintained an organization called the "Equal Suffrage League." That was the rapid deployment vehicle for club mobilization and supporting the right to vote.

Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ida B. Wells and Lucy Stone (left to right, top to bottom) were prominent suffragist leaders.

### **War and progress**

When Alice Paul of NAWSA organized the famous march of 1913 to demonstrate against President-Elect Woodrow Wilson in Washington, D.C., Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells and several Delta Sigma Theta sorority members from Howard University joined the march with enthusiasm and a sense of mission. NACW maintained a separate suffrage office.

World War I had a major impact on the suffrage movement. A significant number of states in the West, Midwest and Northeast started to enact women's suffrage laws. Their efforts provided the political opportunity for a broader change.

In 1916, the suffragists used their formidable political power to campaign for the 19th amendment in various states. In that year, President Wilson sent a letter to Congress in support of the women's right to vote. Congresswoman Janet Rankin of Montana introduced the bill for women's suffrage. It passed in both Houses of Congress and was ratified in August of 1920 with the following statement: "The rights of the Citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged

see SUFFRAGETTE, page 13



## Suffragette movement

continued from page 12

by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

As we strive forward in this new century, women's rights should not be taken for granted. Women of new generations should be grateful, knowing that women in the past secured victories that made lives and circumstances much better for American women of all generations. Countless others since – notably, the recently emerged #MeToo movement – have remained vigilant to protect and extend that progress.

Yet, glass ceilings still exist and pay equity has not been achieved. Domes-

tic violence against women has not been stopped, and sexual harassment is still a major issue in our national dialogue. However, there are hopes and dreams. The suffragists were right about the power of the ballot. The 19th Amendment and women's rising political power have changed the world, and will continue to make a difference, so long as they are safeguarded and put to use.

## Milestones in the Women's Rights Movement

### First Wave

1848: The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 was viewed as "the meeting that launched the suffrage movement."

### Second Wave

1963: The publication of "The Feminine Mystique," by Betty Freidan, ushered in women's rights, equal rights and gender consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s.

### Third Wave

Early 1990s: Professor Anita Hill's sexual misconduct accusations of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas sparked widely publicized hearings by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee.

### Fourth Wave

2012: A resurgence of interest in feminist thinking, especially the issues of technology, justice for women, and opposition to sexual harassment and violence towards women, leading to the present #MeToo movement.

## The vulnerabilities of homeless children

by Leonore Gerstein  
Groundcover Contributor

Originally published March, 2012

Some people say that a society is judged by the way it treats its most fragile members. It sounds like a noble standard, doesn't it? But how does that fit in with another belief we hold in the United States, namely that each individual is responsible primarily for him or herself? Does that sound more like reality to you? And even if you apply that principle to adults, what principle guides our treatment of children,



and above, an impressive variety of after-school programs provide safety and enrichment, while freeing parents to pursue their own goals.

Longtime Alpha House clinical director Peggy Galimberti said, "Children experiencing homelessness look and, for the most part, act just like all other children. They have happy and sad days, challenge limits, and tell amazing stories. They love treats, play, and attention, and need structure and routine. At Alpha House, we work hard to help kids be kids – without the stress of wondering where they will sleep



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Among the many individuals who experience homelessness, none are more vulnerable than the infants, children and adolescents whose well-being depends entirely on their parents, and by extension, on the whole village we call society. Homeless children are marked by the catastrophic events their caregivers experience in ways that can have long-lasting effects. Every stage of growth can be disrupted by the trauma of homelessness.

The loss of home can impair a child's ability to develop the strengths associated with each developmental stage.



Keriell Williams, 5, who is homeless, walks in the Skid Row district in Los Angeles, February 9, 2012. Photo: REUTERS/Lucy Nicholson

nest through multiple interventions for parents and kids, even as we try to eradicate homelessness in the first place.

Local efforts for homeless children and their families leave virtually nothing out. More than 20 agencies coordinate interventions through SOS Community Services ([www.SOSCS.org](http://www.SOSCS.org)). Clients of SOS are assisted with temporary housing, support and outreach designed to meet each family's specific needs, and

and above, an impressive variety of after-school programs provide safety and enrichment, while freeing parents to pursue their own goals.

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Galimberti related one Alpha House success story:

"A mom came to Alpha House with two daughters, ages seven and two. The seven-year-old ("Maria") was extremely outgoing and wise beyond her years. She had the most beautiful brown eyes, and wore her hair in braids with brightly colored beads. Mom shared that Maria had not been in school for some time, as they had been moving around so much and had no way to get her there. Most recently they stayed with a former boyfriend but had to leave due to violence in the home.

In conjunction with Head Start, SOS runs Time for Tots, a preschool serving children from birth to age five, thus extending the Head Start model to meet the needs of unhoused children and their parents. SOS director Faye Askew-King pinpoints language delay as the chief area of concern for the children in this program. TOTS director Janesse Whitlock and Parent Coordinator Caroline Kennedy confirm this but add that within a few weeks in the program, the staff sees improvement in tod-



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The loss of home can impair a child's ability to develop the strengths associated with each developmental stage. Infants and toddlers are working on developing trust, self-esteem and autonomy. School age kids build on these strengths and become intellectually and socially competent. They learn to cope with feelings and to self-regulate. The loss of a physical home often means the loss of the intangible nest everyone needs. Our society is struggling to find ways to recreate that



**Keriell Williams, 5, who is homeless, walks in the Skid Row district in Los Angeles, February 9, 2012. Photo: REUTERS/Lucy Nicholson**

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"While the two-year-old was very quiet and very attached to Mom, Maria quickly engaged with staff here. She was extremely open and happy to share details about her day – both struggles and successes. Maria asked every day if it was "Kids group day" (a

**see CHILDREN, page 14**



## HER STRUGGLE

### Homeless children

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therapeutic group focusing on feelings and friendship skills). On non-group days, she asked if she could play in the Children's Services Coordinator's office. She was a prolific artist, drawing bright, cheerful pictures for staff and other guests. It became clear that Maria felt left out with her younger sister getting most of Mom's non-work time. Staff here worked with Mom on carving out special time for Maria every day – even a few minutes at a time – without her sister present. The Children's Services Coordinator helped Mom learn to listen and attend to Maria, even when Mom felt overwhelmed with work and multiple life responsibilities. Mom and Maria began to really enjoy their time together, and it helped the two-year-old start to play independently, too. Staff helped Mom enroll Maria in school and arranged for transportation and school supplies through the Education Project for Homeless Youth."

The public school system has special services for homeless kids as well, and combined efforts insure that a homeless child can continue to attend his or her home school. After school and summer programs for school-age kids are equally rich and diverse. A stand-out program that involves the University of Michigan community, called "Telling It" addresses the literacy and



**The loss of a physical home often means the loss of the intangible nest everyone needs.**

that have damaged our housing safety net.

The NCFH has written a report card for each state, assessing the extent of homelessness, child well-being, the risk for homelessness and state policy and planning efforts. Among the 50 states, Michigan has a composite score of 22, thus landing somewhere near the middle (one being best, 50 worst). For Michigan, there is both good news and bad news: In the area of state policy and planning efforts, we score fourth in the nation – good news! But

abuse at home. This is a predictor of their own violent behavior in the future. These children experience more chaos and unpredictability than housed children do. The adults who care for them are often unreliable or emotionally unavailable, due to multiple stressors in their own lives. The routines that give life its stability are easily eroded. With hunger and food insecurity a daily reality, schoolwork and social life go by the board. Because of multiple relocations, school attendance is at risk, as is health care. As a result, homeless children are at great

ence of homelessness results in a loss of community, routines, possessions, privacy, and security. Children, mothers, and families who live in shelters need to make significant adjustments to shelter living and are confronted by other problems" – including ones related specifically to the children, such as physical illnesses. The NCTSW also notes that "the stresses associated with homelessness can exacerbate other trauma-related difficulties and interfere with recovery due to ongoing traumatic reminders and challenges."

But instead of continuing this catalog of misfortune, let us pause and try to focus on what else is going on, what some call "structural" problems, or, the way society works that makes all the personal misfortune likelier to occur in the first place. We should remember that the disruptive and non-nurturing factors associated with childhood homelessness are present in the lives of all very poor children. It's just that the level of distress and impairment is often higher when homelessness is added. We must be thankful that, here in Washtenaw County, we have committed people with the skills and determination to reach out and change the lives of these kids and their families, working together and stretching all available resources. Money – also known as resources, economic security, income, bread on the table,



The public school system has special services for homeless kids as well, and combined efforts insure that a homeless child can continue to attend his or her home school. After school and summer programs for school-age kids are equally rich and diverse. A stand-out program that involves the University of Michigan community, called "Telling It," addresses the literacy and writing skills of kids who are at risk for dropping out of school. Despite early educational efforts, homeless kids experience academic failure disproportionately. The battle-weary say that, yes, kids fail in school, but schools also fail kids.

The statistics on homelessness among the young in America are as discouraging today as they have ever been. Indeed, in a recent update to their 2010 report "America's Youngest Outcasts," the National Center of Family Homelessness (NCFH) states that homelessness caused by Hurricane Katrina was disastrous, but the damage to families brought about by the "human hurricane" of greed and mismanagement (from the financial crisis that began in 2007) has been even worse. There was a bounce of recovery after Katrina, as families relocated and started new lives. But the poverty caused by the economic downturn has not yet begun to heal. Compounding that catastrophe are changes in government funding

for each state, assessing the extent of homelessness, child well-being, the risk for homelessness and state policy and planning efforts. Among the 50 states, Michigan has a composite score of 22, thus landing somewhere near the middle (one being best, 50 worst). For Michigan, there is both good news and bad news: In the area of state policy and planning efforts, we score fourth in the nation – good news! But in the area of child well-being, Michigan's rank is 39, just above most of the southern states.

Here are some things we know about homeless children nationwide: Families make up roughly one-third of the entire homeless population. Approximately 1.6 million children will experience homelessness over the course of a year, and on any given day, an estimated 200,000 children have no place to live. Among all homeless women, 60 percent have children under age 18, and more than half are separated from their children. Among homeless fathers, only seven percent live with their children. Single-parent families (mostly headed by mothers) are among the poorest and the most likely to experience homelessness. Some two-parent family units are broken up, with some shelters forbidding access to fathers and even boys past age 12.

According to social research, homeless kids have witnessed more violence than their peers, including partner

violence. The adults who care for them are often unreliable or emotionally unavailable, due to multiple stressors in their own lives. The routines that give life its stability are easily eroded. With hunger and food insecurity a daily reality, schoolwork and social life go by the board. Because of multiple relocations, school attendance is at risk, as is health care. As a result, homeless children are at great risk of failing to attain physical, social and intellectual milestones.

We know that kids don't have an adult's ability to identify their feelings or find the words to express them. Very often, children convey strong feelings indirectly, either by attacking others or withdrawing into themselves. Behind the blows of an aggressive child lies fear and a sense of abandonment, and the tears of a sad child may be fueled by anger and self-repression.

Here is how SOS executive director Faye Askew-Kings summed up her description of homeless children's vulnerabilities: "Their brains look like the brains of people with post-traumatic stress disorder." The symptoms include poor self-regulation, blocking of feelings, difficulty concentrating and learning, and generally speaking, either externalizing (aggression, disobedience) or internalizing (anxiety, depression, guilt) of psychic pain. In the words of The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSW), "The experi-

the level of distress and impairment is often higher when homelessness is added. We must be thankful that, here in Washtenaw County, we have committed people with the skills and determination to reach out and change the lives of these kids and their families, working together and stretching all available resources. Money – also known as resources, economic security, income, bread on the table, purchasing power, and just plain power – is an unavoidable element in any discussion of homelessness. It is a big part of the problem and an equally big part of the solution.

When I asked Ms. Whitlock and Ms. Kennedy of SOS what they would ask for if they could wave a magic wand, they both said, "funding, money, affordable housing" (and maybe we should add, caring people with a little extra time).

Over 20 agencies and civic groups deliver services to the county's homeless families, implementing programs geared toward each age group served. All the county services rely to some extent on volunteers. Think about what you can offer and consider lending a hand. For more information about volunteering, please contact the volunteer coordinator at SOS, phone 734-485-8730. You can learn more about their programs at their website: [www.soscs.org](http://www.soscs.org).



## Not hopeless or helpless, just homeless

by La Shawn Courtwright  
Groundcover Vendor #42

Men, women, and children nowadays  
find themselves deeply infused  
in this thing we call homelessness.

When people see us about,  
doing what we can to somehow  
make it through the day...  
not understanding the circumstances  
people meet our eyes,  
their faces full of disdain!

We're not helpless or hopeless,  
just under a bit of a strain,  
of the constantly changing economy  
in which for now we remain.

We can change this picture if we  
all pitch in to bring it to a halt...

This thing called homelessness!

## Outside, too

by Elizabeth S. Kurtz  
Groundcover Vendor #159

Hi La Shawn,  
Just wanted to let you  
Know that I feel I have lived  
Outside most of my life, too.

Being the only girl child placed me  
Well outside of my family circle;  
The rules of a patriarchy  
Eclipsed my spirit at an early age  
Placing me on the outside of my own emotions.  
You know as well as do I that living outside is no place for growth  
And so I didn't.

Later I lived outside of friendships  
Somehow lacking the social cues to meaningfully connect  
When it mattered.

I feel ya Girl!  
Do you feel me?  
A few years ago  
I began to find my way  
Inside for the first time.



just under a bit of a strain,  
of the constantly changing economy  
in which for now we remain.

We can change this picture if we  
all pitch in to bring it to a halt...  
This thing called homelessness!  
That is to stop any further despair.  
With this in mind, we're only merely there!

Homelessness is not a disease;  
you don't catch it like a common cold  
from a sneeze.

It can come at a time when life is good, then turn around  
like a derailed train that at  
the start [is] traveling smoothly about the tracks.  
Situations hit us and knock us down  
like a boxer in a bout,  
knocked down in the first round  
flat on his back!

Somehow lacking the social cues to meaningfully connect  
When it mattered.

I feel ya Girl!

Do you feel me?

A few years ago

I began to find my way

Inside for the first time.

Once inside I looked around

My spirit and soul

I liked what I saw on the inside, I began to grow

For the first time even thrive

And then I woke up one

Morning on the outside again.

This time

Living in my car

I am on the outside now

Working my way back inside

But my life outside somehow

Strengthens my spirit inside.

Living on the outside

Ain't all bad

If you can cope.

Stay in touch —

Lit



## Is She Woman?

by Shawn Story  
Groundcover Vendor #42

As she walks into the room, legs moving in unison, heels making their own music, her smells of flowers and spices, skin flawless as silk, her glow bright like the sun, and you ask: Is she woman?

Lady of estate

Mistress of honor

Matron of appearance

Doll of beauty

Girl of wonder

Dame of all and you ask is she woman?

Why shouldn't she walk the stage, she there for the showing, art is her makeup, she there for the touch and you ask is she woman?

"Women should love themselves with proper conduct, modesty, and self-control, not of earthly things."

1 Timothy 2:9

## Around us, the clamor grew

by Karen L. Totten  
Groundcover Contributor

"Silence is a cave that provides no shelter."

– Elizabeth Renzetti

And I asked,  
who will address such great need,  
who will give milk and solace?  
Sorrow from history,  
sorrow in the body, and I was afraid.  
But the answers were ours.  
And as if into the limbs of a generous tree  
the children climbed, tentative,  
held as Athena might shoulder their narrow bodies  
or Joan waist deep in the river,  
then set upon the banks of long, soft grass.  
Those who lived in fear,  
those who saw too much,  
or too terrified to even look,  
the ones who kept very, very still,  
the immobile, the good girls, the chastened,  
those who hoped for,  
and the ones who stopped praying.



is she woman?

"Women should love themselves with proper conduct, modesty, and self-control, not of earthly things."

1 Timothy 2:9

Those who lived in fear,  
those who saw too much,  
or too terrified to even look,  
the ones who kept very, very still,  
the immobile, the good girls, the chastened,  
those who hoped for,  
and the ones who stopped praying,  
too young to comprehend,  
all the lost, lonely,  
ignored, and forgotten,  
or disappeared.  
Those who promised to remain silent,  
quiet all these years—  
their stories finally told.  
And they will rise like a wave of birds,  
the phoenix and all her kin— rise with many voices,  
above the fog, flames  
burning back the darkened hours.

## Artworks by Cindy G.

Groundcover  
Vendor #279



Left: Groundcover Vendor Cindy G. holds two of her recent paintings, inspired by her identity as a member of the Kaska tribe.

Top-left: *Kaska Wolf Clan*, by Cindy G. "The clan for native people is about place and who a person is," explains Cindy. "The Sacred Wolf Clan of the Kaska was the warrior branch of the tribe. Each clan member had an expectation in keeping with the old ways and walking their talk. The clan's role was taken very seriously and it was a 'homeland security' for the Kaska Nation. As a Kaska, I keep the old ways alive through my art."

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